

# the guardian weekly

August 2012

**Level » Lower intermediate**  
**Style » Lesson plan**



Welcome to the Guardian Weekly's special news-based materials to support learners and teachers of English. Each month, the Guardian Weekly newspaper selects topical news articles that can be used to practise English language skills. The materials are graded for two levels: advanced and lower intermediate. These worksheets can be downloaded free from [guardian.co.uk/weekly/](http://guardian.co.uk/weekly/). You can also find more advice for teachers and learners from the Guardian Weekly's Learning English section on the site.

## Galápagos islands lose shy superstar

Materials prepared by Janet Hardy-Gould

### Instructions

**Lesson focus:** reading; question formation; vocabulary

**Materials:** student tasks, article, dictionaries

**Time:** 50 minutes

- Show students the photo of Lonesome George (or flick through the Guardian picture gallery at [bit.ly/lonegeorge](http://bit.ly/lonegeorge)). Explain to students that he was a famous giant tortoise who has died recently. They are going to read an article about him. What information might be in the article? For example, information about his home, his size, reason for fame etc. **4 mins**
- Write up the question words: *Where, Who, What, Why, When, How, How much, How many*. As a class think of an example question to ask about George. For example: *How old was George when he died? Why was George famous?* In pairs students prepare two more questions. Monitor and correct. Class feedback. Note the questions on the board. **10 mins**
- Now focus on key vocabulary from the article. Direct learners to the words and definitions in student task 1. Students in pairs complete the sentences. Class feedback. **8 mins**  
**avoid, baffles, extinct, fail, ignore, mates, unique**  
**a** If you \_\_\_ something, you stay away from it.  
**b** If something \_\_\_ you, it is too difficult or strange to understand.  
**c** If a species is \_\_\_, it no longer exists.  
**d** If you \_\_\_ to do something, you try to do it but you don't succeed.  
**e** If something is \_\_\_, it is the only one of its kind.  
**f** If an animal \_\_\_, it has sex.
- If you \_\_\_ something, you pay no attention to it.  
**Answers:** **a** avoid **b** baffles **c** extinct **d** fail **e** unique **f** mates **g** ignore
- Give out copies of the article. Students read and look for the answers to their questions. Class feedback. Are there any questions that can't be answered? **10 mins**
- Direct students to task 2. Students check meanings of the adjectives in dictionaries if necessary. They discuss which adjectives apply to George and tick, then underline sections of the text which justify their ideas. Class feedback. **8 mins**  
**a** [ ] friendly **b** [ ] solitary  
**c** [ ] insignificant **d** [ ] mysterious  
**e** [ ] ancient **f** [ ] common  
**g** [ ] symbolic **h** [ ] fascinating  
**Answers:** b, d, e, g, h
- Write up the following questions. Students make notes about their ideas. Monitor. In groups discuss answers. **10 mins**  
**a** Do you know of other endangered species or subspecies which may die out? Why are they in danger?  
**b** Is it important if we lose animals like George? Why?/ Why not?  
 You can show students a short video of George on the Guardian website at: [bit.ly/lonevideo](http://bit.ly/lonevideo)

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Last of his kind ... Lonesome George Guillermo Granja

## Article: Galápagos islands lose shy superstar

- 1 He was on Ecuador's bank notes and stamps, a symbol of international conservation and often called the "rarest animal on Earth". He was thought to be about 100 years old when he died, but the giant tortoise Lonesome George may in fact have been far older - or much younger.
- 2 In the 40 years he spent in a field on the Galápagos Island of Santa Cruz Island, the 90kg, metre-and-a-half-long animal showed little interest in either man or other tortoises. Scientists' attempts to encourage George to mate all failed. He mostly ignored the females provided, kept his neck down in the grass and only responded to his keeper.
- 3 George was found near a water hole, but no one knows how or why he died. Scientists are still baffled by his life in the islands 1,000km off Ecuador that inspired Darwin's theories on evolution.
- 4 The last representative of a giant Galápagos tortoise subspecies, George had every reason to avoid people. His relatives were all killed by hunters in the 19th century. George possibly has relations on a different island, but it is likely that his whole subspecies is now extinct - the end of a 10m-year-old line.
- 5 US zoo vet Joe Flanagan, who knew George for more than 20 years, said: "George was the last of his kind. He had a unique personality. His natural tendency was to avoid people. He represents what we wanted to preserve forever. When he looked at you, you saw time in the eyes."
- 6 Scientists said George was important because he inspired action to protect global biodiversity. "Because of George's fame, Galápagos tortoises, which were down to just a few animals, have recovered their populations," said Richard Knab of the Galápagos Conservancy, which runs giant tortoise breeding programmes
- 7 George will be missed for financial reasons, too: he helped attract 180,000 visitors a year to the Galápagos islands.

Original article by John Vidal,  
rewritten by Janet Hardy-Gould

## Student task

### 1 Use these words to complete the sentences.

**avoid, baffles, extinct, fail, ignore, mates, unique**

- a** If you  something, you stay away from it.  
**b** If something  you, it is too difficult or strange to understand.  
**c** If a species is , it no longer exists.  
**d** If you  to do something, you try to do it but you don't succeed.  
**e** If something is , it is the only one of its kind.  
**f** If an animal , it has sex.

### 2 Which of these adjectives apply to George.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>a</b> <input type="checkbox"/> friendly      | <b>b</b> <input type="checkbox"/> solitary     |
| <b>c</b> <input type="checkbox"/> insignificant | <b>d</b> <input type="checkbox"/> mysterious   |
| <b>e</b> <input type="checkbox"/> ancient       | <b>f</b> <input type="checkbox"/> common       |
| <b>g</b> <input type="checkbox"/> symbolic      | <b>h</b> <input type="checkbox"/> fascinating. |